



# Getting Started *on the Road to Reliance*

WRITTEN BY ANNIE LEWELYN

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## DEDICATION

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This book is dedicated to my son, Matthew Lewellyn. Because of him, I followed my passions and started living a life of self-reliance.

Thank you for teaching me to appreciate my abilities and be confident enough to teach others also. I hope you are smiling down on me from Heaven and proud of what I have accomplished.

Thank you for being my best friend and my baby!

*- Mom*

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# INTRODUCTION

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In 2019, we lived a normal life. We had a small house on 15 acres of property, an electric bill, water from a well on our property, and food came from the grocery store. We had some farm animals, a few dogs, and some cats. We paid our bills. Like I said, life was "normal".

Then right before summer hit the power bill went up. The next month it went up more. Then higher, higher, and higher. Until it reached over \$3,000! Yes, you read that right, \$3,000.

We tried everything. Payment plans, budget payments, even financial help, but soon ran out of options and the power was shut off from the power company.

We were panicked! How would we get a shower? How would we wash dishes or laundry? How would we keep food cold? How would we provide water for the animals? And the worst question...what about the entire freezer full of frozen meat?

I felt as though we had nothing. I felt like there was no hope. I felt helpless and lost. Then a thought occurred to me. Nobody had freezers in the "old days". No one had a sink with running water. And certainly, nobody had electricity, right? So what did they do? They figured it out!

And guess what? So did we!

We set up rain barrels to collect rainwater. That would provide us with a lot of water for the animals and for watering the garden. We installed rain barrels at all four corners of the house and two at each of the three sheds. It was the rainy season so the timing was perfect. Before we knew it all of the barrels were overfilled and water was aplenty. One problem solved.

## INTRODUCTION continued

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In order to have water for us, we bought a whole bunch of one-gallon water containers. then filled all of the five-gallon water cooler jugs that we had. That would cover drinking and cooking for a bit. For bathing, we could boil water on the gas stove, thankfully, and pour it into the tub. Another problem was solved.

We took everything we could preserve from the freezer and got busy trying to save the most food possible. We managed to save a large amount of food that would have been otherwise wasted.

We brought in the old lamps we had bought for camping, filled them with oil safe for indoor burning, and Voila! Lights!

Our one regret was that we had not been better prepared. We should have started preserving by dehydrating and canning earlier. We should have grown more food such as vegetables, herbs, and berries in our gardens. We should have installed those rain barrels sooner and researched how to filter the water for drinking.

We learned a hard lesson but that experience taught us a lot. It changed everything. We are now working our way to be as self-reliant as possible here. And we have done it one step at a time.

Now I want to help others be prepared. I want to see others more reliant on themselves. And that is the foundation for writing this book.

It is to help guide you on how to get started being more self-reliant. Use it as a guide to starting your own journey on the road to reliance.



With all of the craziness going on in our current world, achieving self-reliance on the homestead has become more and more important to homesteaders and even non-homesteaders. Being able to depend less on others and more on yourself is becoming more of a skill and a necessity.

There are so many ways of achieving self-reliance on your homestead. Some are simple to get started while others may require the learning of some new skills. These skills aren't always the ones you expect, however!

Modern-day skills work in a modern world but to be truly self-reliant, you need to learn skills that pertain to yesterday's world of minimal or maybe no modern conveniences at all.

## **Why Not Use Modern Skills?**

Modern skills are great for the modern-day. Most of these skills require modern-day conveniences like electrical appliances and tools, being on the grid, and having things like running city water and refrigeration at your fingertips.

What if those modern-day conveniences were suddenly not available? Could you sew without that electric sewing machine? Could you keep water flowing without the city providing it for you? Can you keep food at a safe temperature without that fridge or freezer?

I am not saying we are heading for a major catastrophe. I am, however, saying that IF there were one, what would modern-day skills do for you if the grid went down, or water quit running?

How long would your food and water last and therefore, how would you stay healthy?

If you take the time now to learn to do things that do not depend on modern-day conveniences, you will not only start achieving self-reliance on your homestead, but you will continue to thrive for the long haul if the need arose.

## **Where Do You Start?**

So how do you know where to start when working on achieving self-reliance? The best place is to make a list of your priorities. Think about what is most important to you and the health and safety of your homestead and your family. Most families start with the most important areas; water, food, and power.

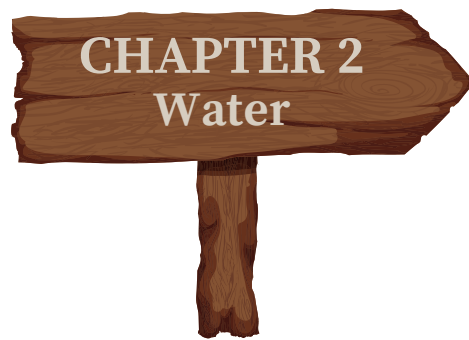
In the event of a natural disaster, for example, ask yourself the following questions:

- Will I have access to clean drinkable water? If not do I know how to purify and filter water to make it drinkable?
- Do I have rain barrels on my homestead that provide filtered water or at least will provide water for animals and gardens?
- Do I have enough food preserved in some way to carry my family for a long period of time?
- Am I growing food and saving seeds to replant for later so I have a constant supply of vegetables, herbs, and fruit?
- Am I connected to solar power? Are there enough panels to keep a fridge or freezer going in a long-term outage? Can I at least provide enough power for some lighting?
- Do I know how to cook over an open fire or on a wood stove if needed?
- Do I have a way to provide heat to my home if needed?

If your answer to any of these questions was a “NO”, I suggest you start working on changing those answers to yes’s. If your answer to the questions were all yes’s then you, my dear, are really well on your way to achieving self-reliance!

## **Your Next Steps**

Taking on all of the above ideas is quite a huge undertaking and unless you have unlimited money, know that it is going to take time and patience. Now that you know the areas you need to work on, let's see how to get started in each one.



## **Providing a Water Source**

No matter what, nothing and no one can live without water. Animals, plants, and people all require water daily. Water is first on the list for a reason! So how do we learn how to get and provide water?

If you live in a city or a small town where water is provided for you, you probably do not have the ability to drill a well. Therefore, you must either stock up on water using 1- 5 gallon containers or start installing rain barrels with a filter system.

Let me add a note here of importance you may not know about. Water that is bottled and unopened does not go bad. However, the plastic that water is bottled in will deteriorate and will let off harmful chemicals after an extended period of time. Keep this in mind.

### **Rain Barrels**

Rain barrels, if allowed by your zoning laws, may be your answer. If you are allowed to have them installed on your property then make sure you also provide some sort of filter system so that the water can be consumed by your family.

### **Using a Well**

For those in a more rural setting, a well is an option. This can be an expensive endeavor and will require power. If that is the only option, then you may want to invest in a solar built system or at least a solar pump which is now available for keeping your well running with no electricity. Again it is an expensive option.

It is possible to dig your own well and install a hand pump if you have the right conditions and the ability to install one.

Please keep in mind - if you are digging your own well have the water tested before drinking it and try to provide some sort of filtration method also.



CHAPTER 3  
Preserving Food

## **Stocking Up the Pantry**

One of the biggest tasks for achieving self-reliance on the homestead is preserving food. This is no easy task because when you are preserving food for your family it is wise to put away enough food for each person in your home for one year. There are many different ways of doing this.

Some of the ways of preserving food when achieving self-reliance include the following:

- **Dehydrating**
- **Canning (pressure and water bath)**
- **Fermenting or Pickling**
- **Smoking and Curing**
- **Freezing (Not recommended for power failures)**
- **Root Cellar Storage**

Let's look at each one and see what will be best for your homestead.

### **Dehydrating**

Dehydrating is thus called because when you do this process you remove all of the moisture from the food in order to make it last longer. But do not fret, because once you add some liquid to the dehydrated food it returns to its original form for the most part.

Dehydrating can be done with an electric dehydrator, or in the sun with a solar dehydrator. You can also use an oven. Just turn it to the lowest setting, cut your fruit and vegetables into ¼ inch slices, and put them in the oven on a lined sheet pan for as long as they need, usually 6 to 8 hours.

I have made Orange Zest, as well as tomatoes and tomato powder in my dehydrator. Strawberries come out amazing from the dehydrator and make a yummy snack.

## Canning Food

Many people have turned to canning for preserving food nowadays. From Water Bath Canning to Pressure Canning, just about everything you grow or harvest can be canned for storage. This includes meat too.

Water Bath Canning is the easiest and usually, the first method beginners start with.

Water bath canning can be used for the following foods safely:

- **Fruits and fruit juices**
- **Jams and jellies**
- **Salsas**
- **Tomatoes**
- **Pickles and relishes**
- **Chutneys, sauces, pie fillings**
- **Bottles of vinegar**
- **Condiments**

There are only a few supplies needed for water bath canning. These may include a complete kit, like the following list.

- **6 Piece Canning Set**
- **Large Canning Pot**

Pressure canning is a bit different in the method and in the supplies. You can learn everything about canning right from the book *The Ball Complete Book Of Home Preserving*. Foods often pressure-canned include the following:

- **meats**
- **seafood**
- **poultry**
- **dairy products**
- **all vegetables**

Supplies needed for pressure canning may include the following:

- **a pressure canner**
- **canning jars**
- **canning lids and rings**
- **jar lifter and canning funnel**
- **towels and pot holders**
- **pots and bowls**
- **spoons, knives, etc.**
- **food to be canned**
- **other ingredients**

## **Fermenting and Pickling**

Fermentation is an amazing natural tool that can help make food more digestible, nutritious, and flavorful. Fermenting food has historically been valued for its improved shelf life and unique taste, aroma, texture, and appearance. It also allows us to consume otherwise inedible foods. For example, table olives must be fermented in order to remove their bitter-tasting phenolic compounds.

Some examples of fermented foods are:

- **cultured milk and yogurt**
- **wine**
- **beer**
- **cider**
- **tempeh**
- **miso**
- **kimchi**
- **sauerkraut**
- **fermented sausage**

## **Smoking and Curing**

According to Wikipedia, "Smoking is the process of flavoring, browning, 17

cooking, or preserving food by exposing it to smoke from burning or smoldering material, most often wood. Meat, fish, and lapsang souchong tea are often smoked."

Smoking involves lower heat levels than actually cooking the meat for a meal. There are two types of smoking: Hot Smoking and Cold Smoking. Hot smoking involves heating the meat to temperatures of 150F whereas Cold smoking is done generally at temperatures of no more than 100F. Cold smoking is usually done to flavor foods and by itself is not an adequate food preservation method.

A smokehouse is ideal. The smokehouse needs to hold the smoke around the meat and allow the temperature to be maintained at about 150F. The better your smokehouse is built, the better it will retain heat and will require far less wood.

## **Freezing as a Way of Preserving**

Freezing food is a great way of preserving food unless you are looking for a way to save food long-term without power. Now if you live in Alaska or a year-round snow-filled climate, of course, this is an option. For most of us, however, freezing is great for being on the grid, but not for off-the-grid.

If power is not an issue for you and you can keep a freezer running and maintained, freezing food is simple, usually lasts a fairly long time, and does preserve most foods rather well.

Some foods like herbs can be frozen fresh or in oil cubes for easy use later. Most veggies must be blanched in boiling water before freezing. Meats and many other foods freeze well as long as you remove most if not all of the air from the package in order to prevent freezer burn.

## **Root Cellar Storage**

Having your own root cellar, whether it be in a cool basement or a block enclosure in the ground is always a great way to preserve your root vegetables. However, homesteaders in states like Florida, California, and Texas, for example, may not be able to do so because the ground does not stay cool enough, and/or they may not have basements that stay cool enough either.

If you are lucky enough to afford a root cellar on your homestead, you are blessed with the means to store fruits like apples, and vegetables like potatoes, carrots, turnips, canned or pickled vegetables, and more.



## **Growing Food and Saving Seeds**

Another great way of attaining self-reliance is by growing your own food and saving as many seeds as possible for the upcoming planting season. You have so many options when it comes to gardening. Here are some types of gardens you may want to start on your homestead.

- **kitchen or potager garden**
- **indoor herb garden**
- **organic garden**
- **tea garden**
- **edible food forest**

Any of the preceding gardens can provide your family with a year's supply of vegetables and herbs. You may also want to include some fruit trees and then learn to preserve the fruit you grow too. You can even grow your own pineapple!

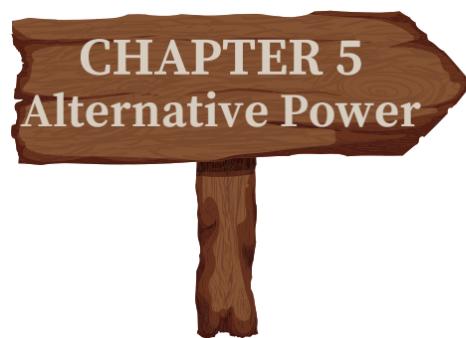
Make sure to learn about building a compost pile and what types of materials go into it. You may also want to start a vermicomposting bin and then learn how to harvest it for your gardens. Follow these methods with getting the proper soil ready and you can pretty much plant whatever you want!

## **How Much Food to Grow**

The amount of food you will grow each season will depend on the number of people in your family and what types of food each person wishes to eat. You won't grow turnips if no one in your home eats them, right? Start out by making a list of which foods your family members eat that will grow in your climate.

## **Saving Seeds**

Achieving self-reliance means you do not depend on others for much if anything at all. Seeds for your gardens should be one of those items you provide yourself. So how do you save seeds from your fruits and vegetables? I would love to hear your response. Please send me an email at [annie@roadtoreliance.com](mailto:annie@roadtoreliance.com) and let me know.



CHAPTER 5  
Alternative Power

## Solar Power

Solar power is one item that can be extremely expensive to get started on in the beginning but will definitely pay off in the long run on your homestead. However, there are some lower-cost ways to get started with solar power for your homestead.

There are many things to consider when deciding whether to get solar panels or not. The cost of the panels and installation are just two factors. You also need to consider your location, the cost of electricity, and any possible incentives you may be eligible for if you install solar for your home.

When you're wondering how much does it cost to get solar panels, there are two main factors that will affect the price: the quality of the equipment and installing it. The average cost of panels and installation can be between \$15,000 and \$25,000. This may sound overwhelmingly expensive. However, high-quality solar panels can last up to 20 years.

There are state and federal incentives for installing solar panels on your home. Currently, there is a federal tax credit allowing you to claim 26% of installation costs in 2020 or 22% of those costs in 2021 as a credit against the amount of taxes you owe.

Some states also offer property tax exemptions, waived and/or expedited permit fees, or cash back incentives. Some states will let you sell any excess power you produce to your local utility company.

If you're considering the option of getting solar, most people will find it's a worthwhile opportunity if you live in an area with sunny days and high energy rates. If your roof is large enough and gets unshaded sun, then getting solar panels can save you money and increase the value of your home. Plus, it's good for the environment!

## **Wind Power**

Wind power is still one of the viable options for electricity solutions. This is, given you have plenty of open land to build smaller or larger turbines. It also is probably beneficial to have a great amount of wind to give these turbines motion.

With a single common home wind turbine, for around \$1,500 you'll be getting an average output of about 1.5 kWh per day. This means you'll need upwards of 30 of these to get enough power to be comfortable. This raises the prices to around \$45,000. That also does not include maintenance, finding places to put 30 turbines, and having the recommended average windspeed of 10 mph.

This option may be more beneficial for someone who needs a little extra power.

## **Hydroelectric Power**

Hydroelectric may be one of the best electricity solutions for you. This, of course, is an option that is only viable with a body of water that is constantly running. It must also have enough speed to consistently spin turbines. The best part, however, is that if the requirements are met, then power could be generated constantly. This is unlike wind and solar. And it gives the opportunity to use the water for other purposes like refrigeration or washing.

While this option may be out of the picture for any property without a stream or body of water nearby, it is a good option for anyone who does. It provides a large amount of power constantly. It can even be paired with solar to have a prodigious amount of power.



**CHAPTER 6**  
**Fire And Cooking**

## **Starting a Fire and Outdoor Cooking**

Without power, you may need to find alternatives to cook and heat water. That's where knowing how to start a fire and learning how to cook outdoors may come in handy.

From gas and charcoal grills, mud ovens, firepits, cooking on hot rocks to solar ovens, there are many ways to cook outside. You just need to decide which is best for you.

Before you get started you may want to invest in a good set of cast iron pots and pans. Then make sure you take the time to learn how to use and maintain them.

To properly start a fire you need what else? Wood. Collecting firewood is important and something you want to stock up year-round since it should be cured before using it to burn. Just cut, split, and store it under a cover to keep it dry. Easy Peasy!

## **Collecting Firewood**

You need to make a few calculations before you start so that you will know how much wood you'll need to survive the winter. First, you should measure your home. The square footage will help determine how much firewood you need. A tiny home heats up much more quickly and requires much less wood to heat. A larger home will take much longer to heat. For example, a 1000 square foot home will require more than twice the amount of wood as a 500 square foot homestead. Even if you only want to heat one or two rooms, the extra space will still cause heat to leak out.

Once you've determined your square footage and how insulated your home is, you need to calculate the months of winter. That will let you know how many nights you'll need to burn wood.

Finally, you need to determine how long you'll burn wood each day. If you are in your home all day, you'll need to burn wood pretty much all day. If you work out of the house and only get home in the evening, you'll burn much less wood.

As a very rough rule of thumb, a wood-burning stove that insulates a 1000 square foot log cabin with storm windows will consume about three cords of wood each winter. That accounts for keeping a fire going most of the day and for a winter that lasts from October to April. A cord of wood is a tightly packed pile that is four feet by four feet by eight feet. If you're in the Northeastern United States, Canada, or the UK, you will likely need about five cords of wood because you'll need to feed the fire more often to keep it roaring.

## **Where to Find Wood**

There are several different sources of firewood. The first and most obvious source of firewood is a dead tree.

The next source of wood is classifieds, which are increasingly available online. Oftentimes, individuals who have fireplaces, other homesteaders, and even lumber companies will offer piles of lumber in online classifieds. They're often offered for free as well.

The same is true of lumber companies and construction companies. These companies often create piles of damaged lumber or scrap lumber. The piles are often available for free.

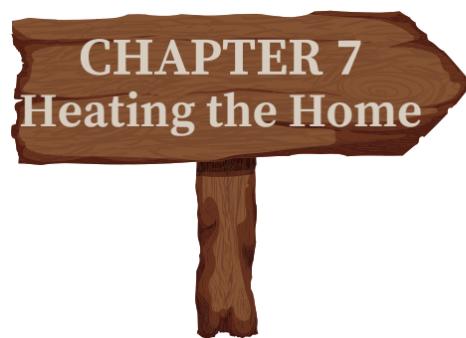
### **Preparing to Burn**

Depending on where you get the wood, you will need to prepare it to burn. If it is scrap wood or some other kind of untreated lumber, you need to make sure that it is dry.

You'll need to make piles of wood that are elevated off the ground. Cover the woodpile with a loose tarp to keep the rain off it.

If you get your own firewood or chop trees, you'll need to season the wood. Seasoning the wood means drying it as much as possible; optimally, you'll reduce the moisture content to about 20% of the weight of the wood. The best way to season wood is by stacking it somewhere in the sun. The more space you can get between each log, the faster it will season. It typically requires about 6 months to season. 12 months would be even better. Stack it off the ground and keep the rain off it.

Finally, you should be loading the seasoned firewood into the most efficient wood-burning stove you can find.



CHAPTER 7  
Heating the Home

## **Providing Heat**

Another important aspect of achieving self-reliance on the homestead is providing heat to your home for your family. Many people have fireplaces that are an excellent heat source and relatively easy to maintain. For those that do not have a fireplace, a wood stove is another option for heating your home.

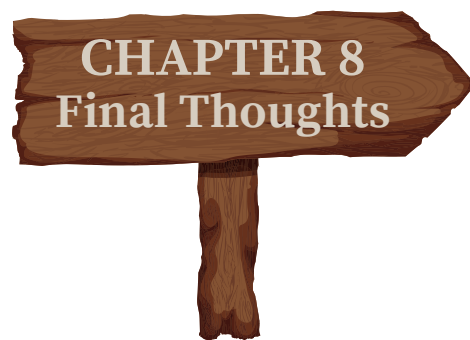
Buying a new wood stove can be expensive, but if that's what you choose then you definitely need to check out the woodstoves from Lehmans. Another option for purchasing a wood stove for cooking, heating or both, is to shop your local Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace.

## **Rocket Mass Heater**

Another option for heat in a smaller home is a rocket mass heater. Rocket mass heaters are a space heating system expanded from the rocket stove, which is considered one of the most efficient wood-burning technologies. The rocket mass heater offers much higher efficiency ratings and claims to be able to heat your home with 80 to 90 percent less wood fuel. This is due to the rocket mass heater design as it allows hotter and more efficient combustion of wood fuel while also allowing for the heat produced to be slowly released.

Rocket mass heaters can reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emitted into the atmosphere.

While rocket mass heaters are technically legal in most places, always review local, state, and federal laws before installing a rocket mass heater. Contact your local building officials to obtain a permit and information on any installation restrictions and inspection requirements in your area. Before installing a rocket mass heater in your home, contact your insurance company to understand what conditions or requirements they may have.



## **Final Thoughts**

You should now be well-armed with many ways of learning some new skills on your journey of achieving self-reliance. Set your list of priorities, choose the most important new skill that you wish to achieve, and learn everything you can with each step.

Remember, achieving self-reliance is a journey you will take and it is not a fast one. It could take months, maybe even years to achieve. What is important is that you continually learn new skills and find new resources to make your individual journey a successful one.

## RESOURCE PAGE

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For more information on the topics covered in this book, check out our website **Road to Reliance** at **<https://roadtoreliance.com>**.